



# News Release

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## **US Labor Department's MSHA to hold June 29 public briefing on investigation of Upper Big Branch Mine explosion**

**ARLINGTON, Va.** — The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration will hold a June 29 public briefing on its investigation into the explosion at the Upper Big Branch Mine in Raleigh County, W.Va. The briefing, to begin at 10 a.m. EDT, will coincide with the one-year anniversary of the start of the agency's underground investigation at the Upper Big Branch Mine and will be held at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beaver, W.Va. A Q-and-A session for the public will take place at the conclusion of the briefing and end by 12:45 p.m., to be followed by a press availability.

MSHA will provide information about the physical evidence gathered in its investigation, as well as summaries of other evidence obtained by investigators. However, the underground investigation, interviews, physical testing and analysis of evidence are still ongoing. As has been the practice throughout MSHA's investigation, some information will remain confidential in light of a concurrent U.S. Department of Justice criminal investigation, which is also ongoing, and requests by federal prosecutors to MSHA to limit the public release of evidence. President Obama has instructed both agencies to conduct thorough investigations into the tragedy, and to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

"Though our investigation is ongoing, we have been holding briefings throughout the process to keep the public informed and share what we can," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "MSHA also has pledged to cooperate with the U.S. attorney and the FBI as they bring to justice those who may have broken the law. This public briefing will be a thorough look at what we know so far, while keeping in mind the need to support other ongoing investigations."

The National Mine Health and Safety Academy is located at 1301 Airport Road, Beaver, W.Va. 25813-9426. Members of the media who plan to cover the briefing are requested to notify Amy Louviere or Jesse Lawder via email (see above) in advance and will be required to show press credentials. Interested members of the public unable to attend the briefing will be able to follow MSHA's presentation online and by telephone. More information on electronic participation will be available on the agency's website at <http://www.msha.gov>.

MSHA already has shared information with the families of the victims through several meetings and also released information via the agency's Upper Big Branch Mine-South Massey Energy Co. single source page at <http://www.msha.gov/PerformanceCoal/PerformanceCoal.asp>.

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Since the passage of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, MSHA has conducted investigations in all fatality cases to determine the cause, identify any violations and assess penalties. There have been approximately 4,000 fatalities since 1977. Over the years, it has been the general practice of the agency to include records and information developed during the investigation with the release of a report at the conclusion of the investigation. The current investigation into the Upper Big Branch Mine explosion and the inquiry into the 2006 Sago Mine disaster are among few examples in which records have been released as the investigation has progressed, and the Upper Big Branch Mine investigation has been one of the most transparent in MSHA's history. MSHA will continue to make publicly available relevant information that will not compromise its investigation or the ongoing criminal investigation.

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